
SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Nancy Skinner, Chair

2017 - 2018 Regular

Bill No: SCR 64 **Hearing Date:** July 11, 2017
Author: Galgiani
Version: June 12, 2017
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: NG

Subject: *Silver Alert Community Education Month*

HISTORY

Source: United Domestic Workers

Prior Legislation: SCR 166 (Galgiani) held in Senate Rules Committee
SJR 4 Chapter 87 Statutes of 2009
AB 643 (Nazarian) Chapter 332, Statutes of 2015
SB 1127 (Torres) Chapter 440, Statutes of 2014
SB 1047 (Alquist) Chapter 651, Statutes of 2012

Support: Unknown

Opposition: None known

PURPOSE

The purpose of this resolution is to declare the month of September 2017 as Silver Alert Community Education Month, and urge state and local agencies to promote greater awareness of the Silver Alert system.

Existing law establishes an emergency alert system regarding child abduction, also known as an “amber alert,” that disseminates information to the public, and may be activated if all the following occur:

- A law enforcement agency receives a report that an abduction has occurred or that a child has been taken by anyone, including a custodial parent or guardian;
- The victim is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death; and
- There is information available that, if disseminated to the general public, could assist in the safe recovery of the victim, as specified. (Gov. Code § 8594, subd. (a).)

Existing law establishes an emergency alert system regarding serious bodily harm committed against law enforcement officers, also known as a “blue alert,” that disseminates information to the public, and may be activated if all of the following occur:

- A law enforcement officer has been killed, suffers serious bodily injury, or is assaulted with a deadly weapon, and the suspect has fled the scene of the offense;
- A law enforcement agency investigating the offense has determined that the suspect poses an imminent threat to the public or other law enforcement personnel;

- A detailed description of the suspect's vehicle or license plate is available for broadcast;
- Public dissemination of available information may help avert further harm or accelerate apprehension of the suspect;
- The California Highway Patrol has been designated to use the federally authorized Emergency Alert System for the issuance of blue alerts. (Gov. Code § 8594.5, subd. (a).)

Existing law establishes an emergency alert system regarding missing persons over the age of 65 and development disabled persons, also known as a "silver alert," that disseminates information to the public, and may be activated if all of the following occur:

- The missing person is 65 years of age or older, developmentally disabled, or cognitively impaired;
- The investigative law enforcement agency has utilized all available local resources;
- The law enforcement agency determines that the person has gone missing under unexplained or suspicious circumstances;
- The law enforcement agency believes that the person is in a danger because of age, health, mental or physical disability, or environment or weather conditions, that the persons is in the company of a potentially dangerous person, or that there are other factors indicating that the person may be in peril.
- There is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the missing person. (Gov. Code § 8594.10, subd. (c).)

This resolution states that the Silver Alert was signed into California law in 2012 to help in the recovery of missing persons who are 65 years of age or older.

This resolution states that the Silver Alert is a quick response system designed to issue and coordinate alerts following the unexplained or suspicious disappearance of an elderly person, with the goal of providing immediate information to the public about the missing person, including images or descriptions and the time and location last seen, to speed up the process of locating the person and returning him or her to safety.

This resolution states that the Silver Alert was recently amended to include those persons who have a developmental disability or cognitive impairment.

This resolution states that there are more than 250,000 people living with developmental disabilities in California, and roughly 1 in 20 adults suffers from a severe mental illness, and that many of these individuals are at great risk of wandering at some point in their lives.

This resolution states that efforts have been made to educate and train those in law enforcement who come into contact with these individuals on how to interact with them and deescalate a situation with the least amount of force, most recently with the passage of Senate Bill 11 and Senate Bill 29 in 2015.

This resolution states that there is a growing need to educate people in communities about the Silver Alert, how it will help in the safe return of their loved ones, and how to interact with these individuals should people come into contact with them.

This resolution states that if more people in the community were aware of the Silver Alert, the chances that a missing individual is safely located would increase.

This resolution declares, by the Senate of the State of California, and the Assembly thereof concurring, the month of September 2017 as Silver Alert Community Education Month in California, and urges all state departments and agencies and local law enforcement agencies to work together to promote greater awareness of the Silver Alert system and to educate communities on how they can help in the safe return of a missing individual.

This resolution declares that the Legislature also recognizes that San Diego’s “AlertSanDiego” system is an ideal tool for notifying the public via email and text message when a person with dementia or other cognitive impairment, or with a developmental disability, goes missing in the region.

This resolution declares that the Secretary of Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

COMMENTS

1. Need for this Resolution

According to the author:

Today, more than 250,000 people are living with developmental disabilities in California. About 1 in 20 adults suffer from a severe mental illness. Also, statistics show that 6 in 10 people with dementia will wander. These individuals represent some of our most vulnerable and at risk citizens. The Silver Alert is an effective tool used to coordinate alerts in a quick response system designed to locate missing persons. Senate Concurrent Resolution 64 will proclaim the month of September 2017 as Silver Alert Community Education Month to promote greater awareness of the Silver Alert System.

2. California’s Senior Population

According to the 2010 United States Census, California’s population of seniors, those of 65 years of age and older, was estimated at 4,246,514 individuals, or 11.4% of the state’s total population.¹ With roughly 4.2 million seniors, California’s senior population is the largest in the nation in regards to absolute population, yet California has a smaller proportion of seniors as compared to other states, such as Florida. While Florida has 3,259,602 seniors, this population constitutes 17.3% of the state’s overall population.

Recent estimates by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC)—a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy think tank—project that California’s senior population will nearly double by 2030, caused by the youngest Baby Boomers reaching the age of 65.² These estimates also find that the proportion of single seniors and seniors without children is likely to increase, suggesting an increased number of seniors living alone. Further, PPIC found that “this particular shift is likely to have a significant impact on senior support services, since on average, people living alone as

¹ Carrie A. Werner, “The Older Population: 2010,” *United States Census Bureau*, 2010, p. 9, accessed June 28, 2017. <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-09.pdf>

² Laurel Beck, Hans Johnson & Landon Gibson, “Planning for California’s Growing Senior Population,” *Public Policy Institute of California*, August 2015, p.1, accessed June 28, 2017. http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_815LBR.pdf

they age are more likely to need either home health care or nursing home care. Taken together, all of these changes point to a new and evolving landscape for senior care in the state.”³

3. California’s Population with Development Disabilities

The California Department of Development Services defines the term developmental disability as a “severe and chronic disability that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment that begins before an individual reaches adulthood. These disabilities include intellectual disability, [a below average general intellectual functioning, i.e., an IQ of 70 or below], cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and disabling conditions closely related to intellectual disability or requiring similar treatment.”⁴

In 2015, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) estimated that about 703,800 individuals living within California had some type of developmental disability. Roughly 280,000 of these individuals were provided services by the state of California, while UCLA speculated that 423,800 of these persons were “high-functioning” who were not eligible for treatment through the state.⁵

4. Silver Alert Effectiveness Generally

According to the Alzheimer Association—a national, nonprofit funding and advocacy organization—“Alzheimer’s disease destroys brain cells responsible for memory, thinking and behavior. As a result, people living with Alzheimer’s or a related disorder may become disoriented and lost, even in their own neighborhood or places that are familiar to them [which is known as wandering]... More than 60 percent of those with Alzheimer’s or another form of dementia will wander, and if a person is not found within 24 hours, up to half of individuals who wander will suffer serious injury or death.”⁶

Silver Alert systems have been created across several States. In some instances, the Alert system has been found to be effective in successfully finding wandering seniors. In North Carolina, of the nearly 40 alerts issued in the state in 2008, all but four of the missing subjects were found alive. These results were “almost identical in Texas, where a similar program was also implemented.”⁷ Similar results were also demonstrated in Florida: of the 75 seniors reported missing in 2011, 75 were found. Silver Alerts were directly credited in the success of finding wandering seniors in at least 45 cases.⁸

³ *Ibid*, p. 1-2.

⁴ Department of Developmental Services, “Information About Developmental Disabilities,” *Department of Developmental Services, State of California*, April 18, 2013, accessed June 28, 2017.

http://www.dds.ca.gov/general/info_about_dd.cfm

⁵ Haleigh Mager-Mardeusz & Gerald Kominski, “More than 400,000 Californians with Developmental Disabilities Remain Outside of the State Safety Net,” *University of California, Los Angeles Center for Health Policy Research*, November 2016, p. 1, accessed June 28, 2017.

<http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/publications/Documents/PDF/2016/DisabilityPN-nov2016.pdf>

⁶ Alzheimer’s Association, “Three Out of Five People with Alzheimer’s Disease Will Wander,” *Alzheimer’s Association*, accessed June 28, 2017. http://www.alz.org/norcal/in_my_community_18411.asp

⁷ M. Alex Johnson, “Silver Alerts Help Track Wandering Seniors,” *NBC News*, September 15, 2008, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/26293194/ns/health-aging/t/silver-alerts-help-track-wandering-seniors/#.WVQ7-ITyuUk>

⁸ Gary Taylor, “Silver Alerts Target Missing Elderly Drivers,” *Orlando Sentinel*, July 23, 2011, accessed June 28, 2017. http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2011-07-23/health/os-silver-alerts-missing-elderly-20110723_1_silver-alert-william-truax-elderly-drivers

5. Argument in Support

The United Domestic Workers sponsors this bill stating:

UDW/AFSCME Local 3930, representing 94,000 In-Home Supportive Services providers in 21 counties throughout California, would like to inform you of our sponsorship of Senate Concurrent Resolution 64...

When a person goes missing, every minute is crucial. Awareness of the Silver Alert in the community would increase the likelihood that a missing person will be safely located. SCR 64 would declare the month of September 2017 to be Silver Alert Community Education Month. This resolution would call on all state departments, agencies, and law enforcement agencies to work together to promote greater awareness of the Silver Alert system and to educate communities on how they can help in the safe return of a missing individual.

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